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ONE INDONESIAN VIEW OF THE MALAYSIA ISSUE

MOHAMMAD HATTA

Indonesia underwent several decades of struggle before finally gaining independence. Many patriots sacrificed themselves for their country. Dozens of leaders were jailed or lived miserably in exile. But the leaders of Indonesia's freedom struggle were not solely concerned with a free Indonesia; they also demanded the liberation of all peoples from every type of colonial domination and oppression.

Once Indonesia had achieved independence, the ending of colonialism everywhere became one of the objectives of its foreign policy. This objective was even incorporated into the Preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which states that: "freedom is truly the right of all peoples and therefore colonial domination throughout the world should be abolished, because it is contrary to the principles of humanitarianism and justice." Besides building up a free, united, sovereign, just and prosperous Indonesia, the Preamble concludes, the government of Indonesia shall "participate in all efforts to bring about a new world based on freedom, eternal peace and social justice." It is, therefore, the duty of every Indonesian government to carry out this policy of freedom for all peoples, because this policy is formulated in the Preamble to the Constitution together with the Pantjasila, the five basic principles of the State philosophy.

Indonesia has no territorial claims whatsoever beyond the area of the former Netherlands Indies. From the very beginning Indonesian nationalism was not determined by identical origin, identical language or identical religion, but had its basis in the realization of various component parts that they formed one entity with a common destiny and purpose. Under Dutch colonial domination, which lasted for more than 300 years, the different ethnic groups in the former Netherlands Indies became aware of sharing the same destiny. It is this phenomenon that provided the base for Indonesian nationalism and thereby defined the territorial limits of the present free and unified Republic of Indonesia. Although the inhabitants of North Borneo, under British colonial domination, share the same island and are of the same race, Indonesia does not demand that this area become Indonesian territory. The same applies to the attitude of Indonesian nationalism towards the part of the island of Timor under Portuguese domination. Beyond the area of the former Netherlands Indies, Indonesia has no territorial aspirations. And since West Irian, which the Dutch tried to keep separate, has been returned, Indonesia has now acquired all its own territory.

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However, under the principle to which it has adhered from the beginning, it is Indonesia's desire that the neighboring areas under British domination should also become free. Britain has given independence to India, Burma and Ceylon; why then are Malaya, Singapore and North Borneo not given independence as well? Malaya, the homeland of the Malays, is entitled to its own state. Singapore with 90% of its population Chinese who have lived there for a hundred years and which has a character of its own, is also entitled to be a separate state, free both from British domination and from domination by the government of its original home country, the Chinese People's Republic. Also the population of North Borneo, mainly of Malay and Indonesian descent, is entitled to its own national identity.

Thus Indonesia has always envisaged on its borders the existence of three free states that were former colonies. Together with the Philippines to the northeast, there would then be five independent countries in Southeast Asia, liberated from a colonial past. These five countries could cooperate in mutual understanding, mutual assistance and mutual respect to protect their common interests and their ideals of eternal peace. As stipulated in the Preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, the freedom of these countries is one of the objectives of Indonesia's foreign policy.

In the middle of November 1949, after the Round Table Conference in The Hague, I spent one night in Singapore on my way back to Indonesia. Malcolm MacDonald, at that time the British High Commissioner in Southeast Asia, invited me for dinner in Johore Baru together with several prominent local officials. On that occasion I said to him:

> Now that Indonesia has become an independent country, I hope that Britain will also grant independence to Malaya, Singapore, and North Borneo. By doing so, Britain would only continue what she has started doing with India. It would make me very happy to see a Free Malaya, a Free Singapore and a Free North Borneo beside our Free Indonesia.

MacDonald replied that it was indeed Britain's intention to grant independence to these territories, but not as three separate states. Fragmentation into three separate states, he stated, would be apt to weaken each of them, hence it would be more suitable if the three areas were united together in one state.

My answer was that if this policy were adopted, the new state that would emerge would inevitably become a second China, dominated both politically and economically by the Chinese. The Singapore Chinese would then be able to extend their power throughout the entire area, and together with the Chinese in Malaya, would no doubt achieve a preponderant position at the expense of the Malays, who would thereby lose their own country. This would not only be very dangerous for the Malays themselves, but also for us Indonesians. Such a second China would probably become an ally and accomplice of mainland China, since it is well known that expatriate Chinese customarily maintain a strong feeling of kinship with their home

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country. It would soon become a communist country. Such a second China, created by the British, could lead to class struggle and racial strife that might easily flare up into a class war and a racial war. In a country that is politically and economically dominated by the Chinese, the Malays and Dayaks would become the oppressed groups. A country that is faced with racial struggle within its borders, is bound to remain weak and in danger of collapse. Therefore, I said, it would be much better for Britain, when granting independence to its colonies in Southeast Asia, to set up three separate countries, this being the only logical division: the State of Malaya for the Malays, the State of Singapore for the Chinese, and the State of North Borneo for those who are of Malay-Indonesian stock together with those Chinese who are old-time residents.

MacDonald then argued that in reality Malaya could not be called a country of Malays, because it was a multi-racial country. Less than half the population was of Malay stock; the Chinese numbered about 40%, whereas at least 15% belonged to other racial groups, such as Indians and various mixtures. In North Borneo the Chinese comprised about 30 to 35% of the population. It was true that in a combination of Singapore and Malaya the Chinese would be in the majority. But in a combination of the three countries there would be a reasonable balance as the Chinese would then no longer be in the majority.

Although I stressed once more that the composition of the population would in no way lessen the spread of Chinese economic hegemony with its political effect, our conversation was not pursued any further. Our two points of view were so far apart that it was impossible to finish our discussions during a dinner party. I could only draw the conclusion that Great Britain had definitely decided to combine these three areas, in spite of their different characteristics, into one state, a member of the Commonwealth. Diplomacy was the only way left open to Indonesia to try and bring about a change in British policy. Efforts were made via diplomatic channels to convince London that the creation of three separate countries would be the best way to terminate its colonial status in Southeast Asia, in order to ensure social prosperity for all of them. After the formation of the Republic of the United States of Indonesia, in which I held the offices of Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, I issued instructions to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that our point of view, as explained by me to MacDonald, should be considered as one of the most important aspects of our Government's foreign policy.

My conviction that the formation of "Malaysia" would result in the elimination of a state which the Malay people could call their own, and its de facto replacement by a second China, became even stronger after my visit to Malaya in mid-1962. Although Malaya was officially the country of the Malay people and its higher officials were generally Malays, more than 70% of its urban population was Chinese. Anyone having an opportunity to observe conditions during even a short visit to Malayan cities

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cannot avoid the impression that he is in China. The Malays themselves are only to be found in the villages. The dominant position of the Chinese is clearly demonstrated by the fact that the Malayan government has found it necessary to set up hundreds of modern small farmer enterprises which are allotted to Malays. For this purpose a special Ministry was set up, called the Ministry of Community Development, under the personal supervision of Tun Abdul Razak. In the cities there is no scope for the Malays; for their economic welfare they depend on the new small-scale enterprises being set up in the villages.

I also found it interesting to note the Ministry of Information's energetic efforts to propagate the use of Malay as the national language. The Chinese in Malaya, even those who have lived there for several generations, make no effort to speak Malay, but persist in using the language of their forefathers, Chinese. The Chinese intellectuals use English in their conversation. Essentially, the Chinese in Malaya consider Malay an inferior language, and do not take the trouble to learn it. They are proud of being Chinese, even when working as servants of wealthy Malays. The Chinese houseboy or cook or laundry boy always speaks his or her own language; the employer can only make himself understood to his employee if he can speak some Chinese. During a conversation with an official of Chinese origin, I mentioned the expression "Tionghoa," which is the usual term for Chinese in Indonesia. He immediately said: "What do you mean, Tionghoa? I am a Chinese," a name he was proud of. This was in fact not surprising, because in his mind he was still imbued with the traditional British colonial attitude in which the whites form the upper class, the Chinese the middle class and the Malays the lower class.

The attitude of the overseas Chinese in Malaya is completely different from that of their counterparts in Indonesia. The "Tionghoa peranakan" (the Chinese who have lived here for generations) do not want to be called Chinese, but consider themselves as Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent. Generally speaking, their feelings are those of Indonesian nationals, with the same national ideals. Their grandparents may still speak Chinese, but they themselves do not. Before Indonesian became the national language—that is, in the former Netherlands Indies—the Chinese used to speak the language of the region in which they lived. If they were born in Central or East Java, they spoke Javanese. If they were born in West Java, they spoke Sundanese. If they were born in Minangkabau, they spoke Minangkabau. Chinese intellectuals and those with Western education learned to speak Dutch and "pasar" Malay, over and above their own regional language. In those days, the Chinese newspapers were written in "pasar" Malay or in "Chinese-Malay," a mixed language closely related to Malay. These languages no longer exist and have since been replaced by the Indonesian language.

Why is there such a difference in mentality between the overseas Chinese in Malaya and those in Indonesia? The reason is that before World War II

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there was no national movement demanding an independent Malaya. This national feeling only came into existence after the emergence of several new independent and sovereign nations in Southeast and South Asia. During the Dutch colonial period a national movement had already become active in Indonesia, and exerted a strong influence upon the Chinese community in Indonesia. In addition, this national movement and the Partai Serikat Islam, which included a number of Chinese among its membership, the Partai Tionghoa-Indonesia, a "Tionghoa-peranakan" party under the leadership of Liem Koen Hian, was also striving towards Indonesian independence; its members wanted to give up Chinese nationality and become Indonesian citizens once Indonesia became free. Thus, the Indonesian freedom movement during the Dutch colonial period influenced the development of Indonesian national feelings among the Chinese in Indonesia. At present they no longer like to be called Chinese, but only Indonesians. The course of history in Indonesia has gradually made them real Indonesians. Only their names remind one of the country from which their ancestors came; their language and way of life are Indonesian.

The history of the Chinese in Malaya and their present strong position in that country, however, will not make them Malays. They will remain Chinese and due to their activities they will retain their economic, social and political dominance. In order to protect the Malays, weak as they are in all respects, economically, politically, and socially, and in order that the Malays will have their own country and their own free state, it is necessary that independent Malaya stand on its own. The creation of a "Malaysia" is nothing but the creation of a second China using the mask of "Malay," a new colony dominated by Chinese capitalists, oppressing the Malay nation.

I have often discussed this matter with Malay leaders, both in Djakarta and in various places in Malaya itself. It is my impression that most of them—though not all of them—are pleased with the aims of "Malaysia," without having considered in any depth the consequences for their own nation. Some of them even told me that the creation of Malaysia should be considered an internal matter for the three groups concerned; they requested my moral support as a friend from a country whose policy is opposed to interference in the internal affairs of another country.

I replied, as I also have done in public: "The creation of Malaysia will become a sound policy if it is supported by the peoples of the countries concerned." History will provide the correct answer, and history alone will provide the right appraisal of my view!

MOHAMMAD HATTA was formerly Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia.

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